THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 1976

Paper in Moscow Links 3 U.S. Correspondents to the C.I.A.

MOSCOW, May 25 (UPI)—The Soviet weekly Literaturnaya Gazeta, in its issue for tomorrow, suggested that three American news correspondents accredited in Moscow were associated with the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

The correspondents were Christopher S. Wren of The New York Times, George Krimsky of The Associated Press and Alfred Friendly, Jr., of Newsweek.

Literaturnaya Gazeta, the publication of the Union of Soviet Writers, gave no evidence to support its assertion.

A United States Embassy spokesman denied the allegation.

"We certainly know of no journalist in this town who has any connection with the C.I.A.," the spokesman said.

[In Washington, the Central Intelligence Agency said that pending study of the full Soviet article, it would stand by the statement by the embassy spokesman in Moscow that he knew of no American journalist in the Soviet capital with any C.I.A. connections, United Press International reported.]

Much of the article, two full columns on page 9, quoted extensively from the American press about the alleged involvement of some newsmen with the C.I.A.

Of the three newsmen in Moscow, it said:

"Their loyalty to the C.I.A. is surprisingly combined with their commitment to the free press."

The literary publication said it had received letters from readers in Moscow, Tbilisi and Tallinn "confirming this."

"These letters concretely and convincingly described the hostile, subversive activity of these correspondents in plainclothes," Literaturnaya Gazeta said.

It gave no indication of who had sent such letters or what they contained.

"In particular," the article said, "the letters spoke about the heightened interest of these correspondents in certain information and objects that evidently exceeded the framework of the journalists' profession."

It added that the correspondents "do not bother their professional 'conscience'" about journalistic ideals and alleged: "They receive their payments from places other than the cash offices of their newspapers."

A senior Western diplomat said the allegation was clearly "preposterous" but could not immediately offer any explanation for it. The three correspondents are competent in the Russian language and have worked in the Soviet Union for two years or more.

Although the Russians have often made accusations in the past against American and other foreign reporters accredited in Moscow, this was the first time in recent memory that the Russians have alleged any link between a correspondent and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Allegations Strongly Denied

The Associated Press, Newsweek and The New York Times each denied charges yesterday by the Soviet weekly Literaturnaya Gazeta that their Moscow correspondents were associated with the Central Intelligence Agency.

"It's ridiculous," said a spokesman for the A.P.

"Newsweek correspondents work for Newsweek only," a spokesman for Newsweek said.

In a statement, The New York Times Company said that "The Times emphatically denies the charge." The statement said that The Times had received assurances in the past from George Bush, Director of Central Intelligence, that no staff member or employee of The New York Times was used operationally by the C.I.A. The Times said that it would once again seek to get assurances from Mr. Bush that no Times employees or part-time employees were involved in C.I.A. activities.

The Times said that if these assurances were not forthcoming, it would consider filing suit to compel the C.I.A. to make the information known. Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, publisher of The New York Times, said that the present C.I.A. policy of refusing to reveal its full association with American journalists had the effect of casting suspicion on all newsmen and making them "susceptible to any unsubstantiated charges that anyone might wish to bring against them."

Neither Mr. Krimsky nor Mr. Friendly could be reached for comment. Mr. Wren, speaking from The Times Moscow bureau, said that the charges were "totally fabricated."

"I am looking forward to having them present me with the evidence," Mr. Wren said.

Wren in Moscow 3 Years

Mr. Wren became Moscow bureau chief in December 1974 after a year as a Times correspondent in the Soviet Union. Before that he worked on the metropolitan staff in New York for a year. He came to The New York Times from Newsweek, where he was a general editor, and before that he worked at Look magazine. A graduate of Dartmouth College, he lives in Moscow with his wife and two children.

Mr. Krimsky joined The Associated Press in 1969. He worked for two years as a correspondent in Los Angeles and then on the world service desk in New York. He was transferred to the A.P. Moscow bureau in 1974. He is married and has one child.

Mr. Friendly worked for Newsweek in Chicago and Rome from 1962 to 1965. He then joined The New York Times and worked in Indonesia, Nigeria, Italy and Yugoslavia. In 1972 he became counsel to the Senate subcommittee on intergovernmental relations. Two years later, he rejoined Newsweek as Moscow bureau chief. He is married with two sons.

U.S.S.R., alleged today that one of The New York Times correspondents in Moscow, Christopher Wren, was associated with the Central Intelligence Agency. The Times emphatically denies the charge, and Mr. Wren, reached in Moscow, said, "The charges are totally fabricated. I never worked for the C.I.A."

The bases of The Times's denial are Mr. Wren's own statement, and two letters from George Bush, Director of the C.I.A., in response to queries directed to the agency by A. M. Rosenthal, managing editor, and Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, chairman and president of the company and publisher of the newspaper.

These letters were dated Feb. 3, 1976, and Feb. 9, 1976.

In the Feb. 3 letter, Mr. Bush reported that "no staff member or employee of The New York Times is used operationally by the C.I.A." A similar assurance to Mr. Sulzberger was made in the Feb. 9 letter in response to a request by The New York Times under the Freedom of Information Act. The Times was seeking to know if any of its employees or stringers had acted, knowingly or unknowingly, as United States intelligence agents or as informants for the United States intelligence community. Mr. Bush's assurances dealt only with full-time staff members. Mr. Wren is a full-time employee.

"This event," Mr. Sulzberger said, "dramatically confirms The Times's view that The Times and all other news organizations cannot maintain their reputation for independence as long as the C.I.A. continues to obscure the facts by refusing to reveal its full association with American journalists. The present C.I.A. policy of withholding the full extent of these associations results only in casting suspicion on all newsmen and makes them susceptible to any unsubstantiated charges that anyone might wish to bring against them."

"It is essential that not only the readers of the newspaper but our news sources have assurance that they are dealing only with us and not with some secret branch of the Government," he added.

In the light of the latest developments The New York Times will, once again, seek to get the necessary assurance from Mr. Bush and the Central Intelligence Agency that none of its employees and stringers are involved in intelligence activities. In the event that such assurances are not forthcoming, The Times will consider filing a suit to compel the agency to make the information known.